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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this booklet is to provide suggestions that may be helpful to local school communities as they create their own ways of involving parents in the school. It presents a planning model that identifies seven specific steps that might be taken by any community to fashion a model appropriate for that community. These steps suggest the following processes: (1) assessment of needs, (2) developing a philosophical base; (3) determining purpose, (4) identifying communication-interaction patterns, (5) developing an organization structure, (6) identifying parent involvement outcomes, and (7) evaluating the effectiveness of parent involvement. Several profiles of parent involvement programs are also given. The programs presented provide specific examples of the kinds of functioning programs that are currently underway in Wisconsin schools. (Author/AM)

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN YOUR SCHOOL

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Barbara Thompson, Ph.D./State Superintendent

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*This Task Force includes 14 parents, 5 grandparents, with 49 children and 5 grandchildren.

Foreword

Wisconsin schools benefit from the continuing interest and participation of many parents. We are not alone among the states in recognizing the important contributions made by this participation, nor are we alone in recognizing the need to improve the orchestration of these interests. In recent years there has been increased emphasis throughout the country on the design and implementation of parent involvement programs. State and federally funded programs now require the inclusion of plans for parent involvement. Special Educational Needs, ESEA Title I, Headstart, and the bilingual programs are but a few examples. Through the experience of these funded programs and parent-teacher associations in Wisconsin schools, we have learned much about building effective parent-school relations, but there are still many ways in which we can improve these efforts.

This planning model was prepared to aid those working to improve parent involvement in their schools. The Task Force appointed to create this publication chose to present a plan that can be used to create or improve the quality and nature of parent involvement in Wisconsin schools. Creating such a program is no easy task but the Task Force has delineated seven steps that, if implemented, promise to yield maximum value for parents, schools and children. This publication answers a number of questions that will be asked by those who seek to build strong parent involvement programs.

> Is there a single parent involvement program model that can serve all schools?
>
> How can we identify those activities that will bring parents and schools closer together?
>
> What resources are available to those who design parent involvement programs?
>
> What steps should be taken?
>
> How can we determine the needs of our school that should be served through parent involvement?
>
> What outcomes might we expect from an effective parent involvement program?

These are but a few of the questions the Task Force has sought to answer in preparing this planning model.

The implications of effective parent involvement programs are widespread. Primarily we think of the value such involvement holds for children. These experiences may also provide education for parents, encouragement for teachers, assistance for administrators, and help for the community. It is my hope that support for the school will continue to expand and thus create in each community an environment conducive to the fulfillment of educational aspirations. These aspirations can be achieved only to the extent that parents are an integral part of the total school effort.

Barbara Thompson, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Parent Involvement is Essential

The purpose of this publication is to provide suggestions that may be helpful to local school communities as they create their own unique ways of involving parents in the school. Clearly, no single model will serve all schools. Schools differ, needs differ, and the purposes for which parents become involved with schools differ. The committee responsible for the ideas presented here rejected the idea that any one set of specifications would serve all schools. Hence, this report presents a planning model that identifies specific steps that might be taken by any community to fashion a model appropriate for that community.

Parent involvement is an essential ingredient of the effective American school. In the early days of American education, there was a strong community commitment to the building and maintenance of the local school. Parents were involved in a variety of ways and perceived the school as their school. As the structure of American society became more complex, continuous involvement became more difficult. Indeed, many parents opted out as the school was viewed by some as a social agency charged with the care of children in addition to the traditional responsibilities they had for the education of these children. The resulting separation of parents from the schools they support with their vote, their dollars, their children, their hopes and their aspirations today requires our serious and continued attention.

There is today a great awareness of the need to make the school a more integral part of the total home-school-community life of the child. Teachers and parents are reaching out in search of ways to communicate more effectively. Home visits, classroom visits, volunteer services, written notes, telephone calls, luncheons, PTA/PTO meetings and committees, attendance at school board meetings, parents as specialists in the classroom, parties, plays, picnics, and parents' nights combine in a potpourri of activities to enrich the community life of the school.

Though the opportunities for parent involvement are great, they are no greater than the needs. Needed are opportunities for parents to know their child's teacher; for teachers to know each child's parents; for parents to feel welcome in the classroom, to find ways of helping in useful roles as volunteers, to serve as tutors, to assist in preparation of materials, to serve as resources from the adult community, to feel comfortable with teachers visiting in their homes, and to sense that their ideas about school policy are valued. Parents want help: help in understanding the school their child attends, help in understanding their child at home; help in understanding their roles in the education of their own children. Teachers, too, need help: help in feeling their contributions to the life of each child is valued by parents; help with the overwhelming task of individually serving each child in the class; help in feeling a part of the larger community in which they serve.

The needs and the opportunities are great. So great indeed, that a carefully organized approach is required if these needs and opportunities are to be met. The planning model presented herein is designed to help communities develop an organized approach to serve this purpose.

The sources of assistance to school communities are wide and varied. Near at hand in each community are individual teachers and parents with many useful ideas and with commitment to the enhancement of parent involvement. Because of their commitment to parent involvement, these teachers have found their own techniques that keep parents informed and actively involved in their specific classrooms. Parents, too, frequently find ways of communicating with teachers through a variety of techniques. These valued resources are in every local community.

In Wisconsin one finds many instances of effective parent involvement programs. It was this rich source of close-at-hand data that prompted the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Barbara Thompson, to name a statewide committee of persons with expertise in this area to provide information, data, ideas, and assistance of many kinds in the preparation of this report.

Wisconsin is not alone in its search for more effective ways of involving parents. In many states, some form of parent involvement is required or recommended by legislation, as reported in a survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Parent Involvement at Berkeley, California, under the direction of Daniel Safran. This center is one of three national centers created to study and promote parent involvement (the Institute for Responsive Education at Yale University, and the National Committee for Citizens in Education at Columbia and Maryland Universities).

A Planning Model for Parent Involvement

The planning model is described here to provide a strategy for working toward the development and implementation of a parent involvement program. Though specific steps are identified in the model, in practice it is usually difficult to separate the steps as clearly as they are in a written statement. Certainly the assessment of needs, for example, is bound to be influenced by any philosophy about parent involvement. The design of the assessment itself reflects that philosophy, yet the statement of the philosophic base

may or may not be prepared prior to the initiation of the needs assessment.

The seven steps of the process include:

1. Assessment of Needs
2. Developing a Philosophical Base
3. Determining Purpose
4. Identifying Communication-Interaction Patterns
5. Developing an Organizational Structure
6. Identifying Parent Involvement Outcomes
7. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Parent Involvement

Step 1: Assessment of Needs

An effective parent involvement program focuses on specific objectives. The needs assessment is the starting place in the identification of those objectives that give direction to parent involvement. Needs are many, resources are few and so priorities must be established. The assessment of needs may identify one or several points at which parent involvement may be focused to improve the school effort. Though the range of needs that may be served through a parent involvement program is wide, the ultimate need is to assure that the child receives the highest quality education possible.

Procedure. Before consideration of the needs assessment procedures, the set of goals that are to be the focus of the needs assessment should be made clear. For purposes of this model, let us make the assumption that the goals of the needs assessment are:

1. to determine the extent to which parents are now involved with the school,
2. to determine what purposes parents think are served through particular kinds of involvement.
3. to determine whether parents think they would want to participate in these particular activities, and
4. to determine how frequently parents believe these activities should take place.

In answering the first question, "To what extent are parents now involved in the school?", data may be gathered from a number of sources.

From the principal:

1. parent attendance at PTA or PTO
2. parent membership on school committees
3. number of parent conferences held at school over a given period of time
4. number of parent contacts outside of school
   a) through community organizations
   b) through direct contact in homes of students

From teachers:

1. schedule of parent participants in the classroom
   a) aides
   b) tutors
   c) observers
2. the frequency and purpose of various strategies used in communicating with parents at home
   a) classroom newsletter
   b) scheduled report cards with notes
   c) occasional notes
   d) telephone
3. frequency of informal community contacts with parents
   a) in the neighborhood
   b) in community organizations
   c) in religious groups

From parents:

1. frequency of school visits
2. frequency of contacts with teachers
   a) by phone
   b) by notes
3. membership on school committees
4. participation in school activities
   a) aide
   b) tutor
   c) observer
   d) through PTA/PTO
   e) other

Data collection procedures may include questionnaires, telephone or personal interviews, or records of parent contacts that have been made. Collecting and organizing data like that suggested above provides a comprehensive view of current parent involvement. Having analyzed such data, one might conclude that parent involvement is heavier or lighter than expected, one might conclude there is too much concentration in one or two kinds of involvement, or one might conclude that teachers perceive the amount and nature of involvement in substantially different ways than do either the principal or the parents.

Answers to the next three questions can be obtained through a single questionnaire. This must be carefully designed because the way questions are asked determines the quality of the data received. What purposes are served by particular activities, whether parents want to participate in these activities and how frequently parents should be involved in each of these activities can be parts of the same questionnaire.

Activity #1 (example)

PARENTS WORKING IN THE CLASSROOM TO:

	How Helpful?			Would You Participate?			How Frequently?		
Purpose	*none*	*little*	*much*	*yes*	*maybe*	*no*	*never*	*seldom*	*often*
Improve student's sense of worth									
Improve student's achievement									
Improve student's enjoyment of school									
Improve relationship between home and school									

Activity #2 (example)

SCHOOL PERSONNEL WORKING WITH PARENTS:

	How Helpful?			Would Like Doing For this Purpose		
Purpose	*none*	*little*	*much*	*yes*	*maybe*	*no*
Improve parents' communications with the child						
Improve the nature of play in the home						
Improve parents' understanding of today's youth culture						

The list of activities surveyed through a questionnaire could be extended to include a wide range of possibilities. Some additional examples include:

Home visits
Telephone calls to home
Parents as aides
Teacher invited into home
Meetings with principal
Parents' night
School or class picnic
Helping with school fair
Parent as specialist
Parents on school policy committee
School newsletter
Scheduled conferences
PTA/PTO participation
Parent-parent sharing
Parents tutoring

In analyzing data gathered with such a questionnaire, one is able to determine which activities parents believe most likely to serve what purposes and the extent to which parents are likely to participate given the opportunity.

Step 2: Developing a Philosophical Base

If an effective parent involvement program is to be the result, those planning the effort need to develop a common understanding about their views on parent involvement. This requires time, energy and commitment. Parents should be carefully selected for the advisory committee. The group must be able to work together in forging a common philosophy, yet must be representative of a wide range of parent interests in the community. Beliefs clarified and agreed upon at an early stage by such a group do much to give unified direction to the effort. Does parent involvement really

mean that parents can assume responsible roles in helping to set school policy? If they can assume these roles, should they? Does parent involvement mean that communication should be multi-directional among teachers, parents, school personnel and other community workers, or does communication go primarily from teachers to parents? Does parent involvement mean parent participation in the classroom primarily for the purpose of relieving the teacher of some routine duties, improving children's achievement, or helping parents feel they are part of the school? Clarifying such issues can do much to help set the stage for determining the purpose of the parent involvement program and the directions it will take within individual schools.

Procedure. Many procedures have been used in helping groups identify attitudes and values they hold. All of them include a heavy emphasis on discussion of specific values and what they mean to the task at hand.

The beginning point may be with a list of statements that include beliefs, values, and attitudes that are thought to be important. Such a beginning list might include some of the following statements or others you might generate:

1. Parent involvement means that parents should have an influence on the programs and policies of the school.

2. Parent involvement means that parents need to know more about the school their children attend.

3. Parent involvement means that parents should be a part of the community that determines the nature of the school.

4. Parent involvement means that school personnel help parents understand better the way they can improve educational environments for students.

5. Parent involvement means parents, teachers, and others working together to improve school-community-home environments for students.

6. Parent involvement means that organized parent-teacher groups can do much to facilitate effective home-school relations.

7. Parent involvement means that parents should be welcome to observe in the classroom.

8. Parent involvement means parents serving as active partners with teachers in the classrooms as aides and tutors.

9. Parent involvement means meetings of parents with school administrators to plan and coordinate a wide range of school activities.

10. Parent involvement means that parents should be informed by their child's teacher how parents might help at home or in the school.

11. Parent involvement means teachers communicating by notes, telephone, and personal visits with parents.

12. Parent involvement means school picnics, fairs, parents' nights, and other community-school activities.

13. Parent involvement means continuously working to build a strong base of support for the schools throughout the community.

The next step is to submit such a list to the broad community of persons concerned about the quality of education in the school. Discussion of these items and many others, added as the discussion proceeds, will reveal contradictions between or among items and preferences by individuals for their particular favorites. Now the debate becomes both more interesting and more crucial. The task is to identify a number of items supported by the majority of persons and placed in some order of importance.

Finally, each item on the list should be clarified through a two or three paragraph statement that presents briefly what the community feels that statement means. For instance, the statement, "Parent involvement means that parents should have an influence on the programs and policies of the school," requires elaboration both in terms of how much influence and whether on programs, policies, or both. Does influence mean that parents have a voice or a vote in policy committees, or does it imply a kind of behind-the-scenes influence? Does the statement mean curricular, health, sports, or parent involvement programs?

A few paragraphs accompanying each statement that address such questions give readers an understanding of what is meant by such a statement. Of importance, also, is that having to prepare such accompanying materials makes certain that those who espouse these statements really talk to, not past, each other. These statements made in committee or discussion groups often sound good though empty in meaning. More school faculties and community groups need to spend time in such discussions so as to clarify the underlying nature of the tasks they share in common. The broader this base of discussion throughout the community, the more confidently can one claim concensus.

Step 3: Determining Purpose

Given the results of the needs assessment and the statement of philosophy, one is ready to consider the purpose for which a parent involvement program is to be designed. The basic purpose will grow out of the discrepancy that exists between what is needed and what the philosophy statement indicates to be high priorities as to the role and nature of parent involvement in the school. This is a time-consuming process that pays big dividends when coupled with wide distribution of the statement.

In a general parent involvement program, parents

may be involved in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes. Teachers may emphasize their role as home visitors, may work with parents in the school, may help parents find community resources as needed, and may increase their written and telephone communications with parents about their individual children. Programs for specific purposes may fall under such descriptive titles as:

Infant/Preschool Home Visitation Program

Parents as In-school Teachers Program

Integrated Community Resources Program

Curriculum Improvement Parent Involvement Program

Parent Advisory Involvement Program

Whether a general or specific parent involvement program is to be the result, clear identification of purpose is important and a descriptive title may serve to focus attention on the major intent. Identification of the major purposes comes next. Given the first specialized parent involvement program identified above, the purposes may be identified as follows:

Infant/Preschool Home Visitation Program

Purposes:

1. To increase parental understanding of the importance of early educational experiences for the child.

2. To help parents understand the relationship between specific educational activities at home and later school experiences.

3. To imporve parents understanding of the concept of readiness.

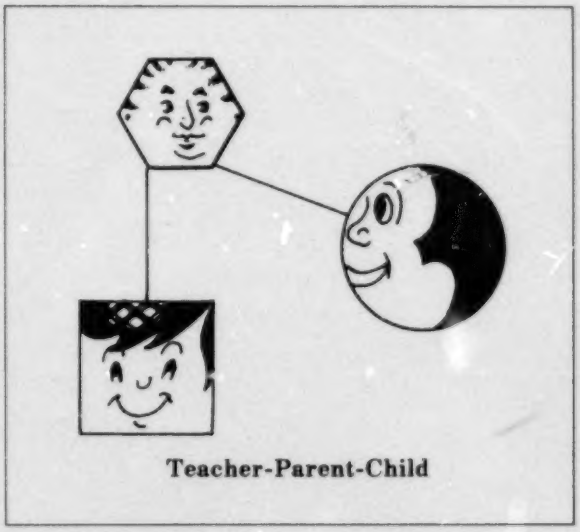
4. To put parents in touch with community resources that may prove helpful in the growth of their child.

5. To help parents and child make a smooth transition from home to day care or school attendance.

Though incomplete, as an example, the set of purposes illustrates the specificity with which purposes might be stated. Given such a set of purposes, the design of activities to accomplish such purposes can be initiated.

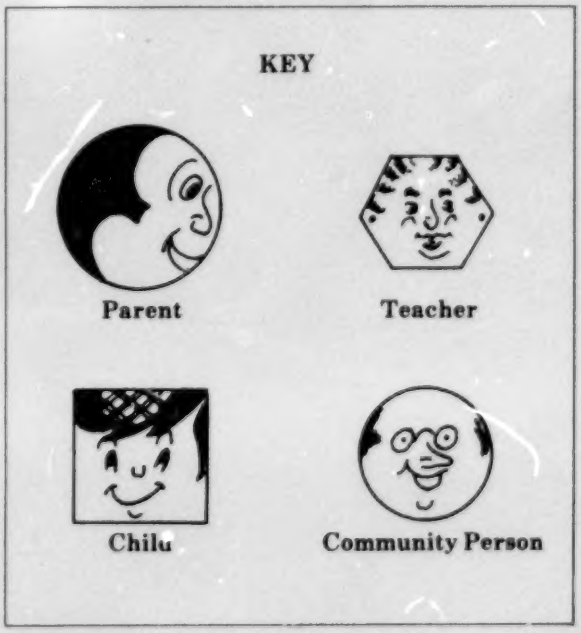
Step 4: Identifying Communication-Interaction Patterns

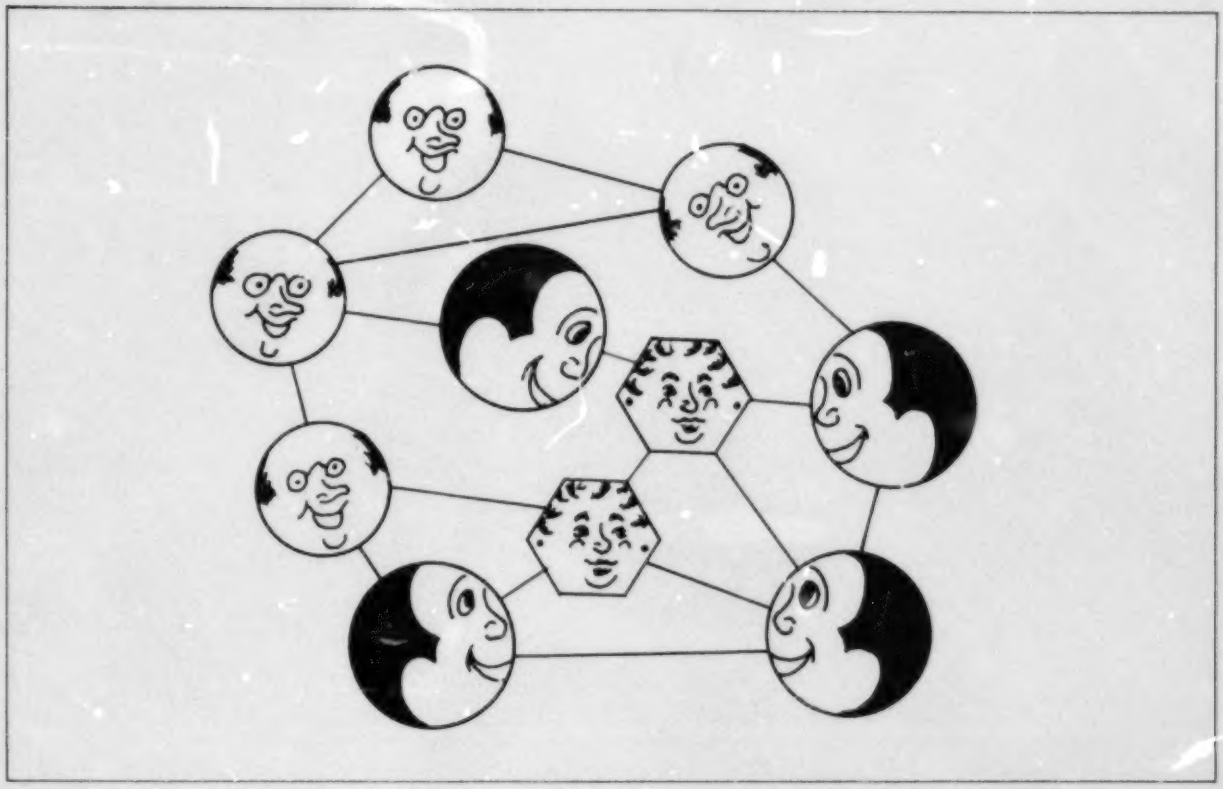
Activities designed to achieve the purposes of a parent involvement program can best be considered in terms of desired personal interactions. If parents are to be involved, they need involvement through personal interactions with teachers, other parents, administrators, children, community workers, or other school personnel. Change in the nature and quality of education in the school, then, is to be enhanced through interaction that involves parents and this provides education by and for parents and others associated with the effort.



Teacher-Parent-Child

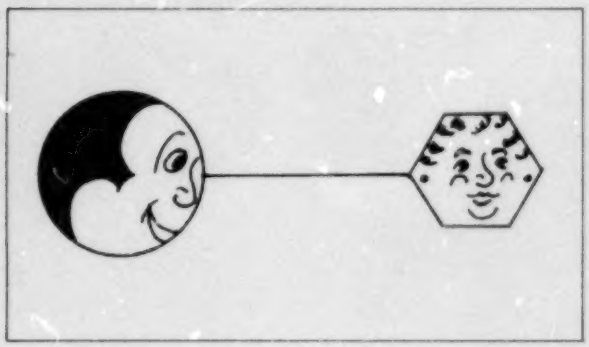
Interaction should match purpose and it should be expected lines of communication will differ as audience and purpose of communication differ. If parents are to be helped in providing a more educative environment for children at home, a simple pattern illustrates the desired communication. Parent involvement in decision making at the school or system level requires a larger communication network.





Here the illustration includes community persons along with teachers and parents. In some instances administrators and other school personnel may also be included.

In the simplest pattern shown, the purpose of communication is to help the parent understand the child better through participation in classroom activities.

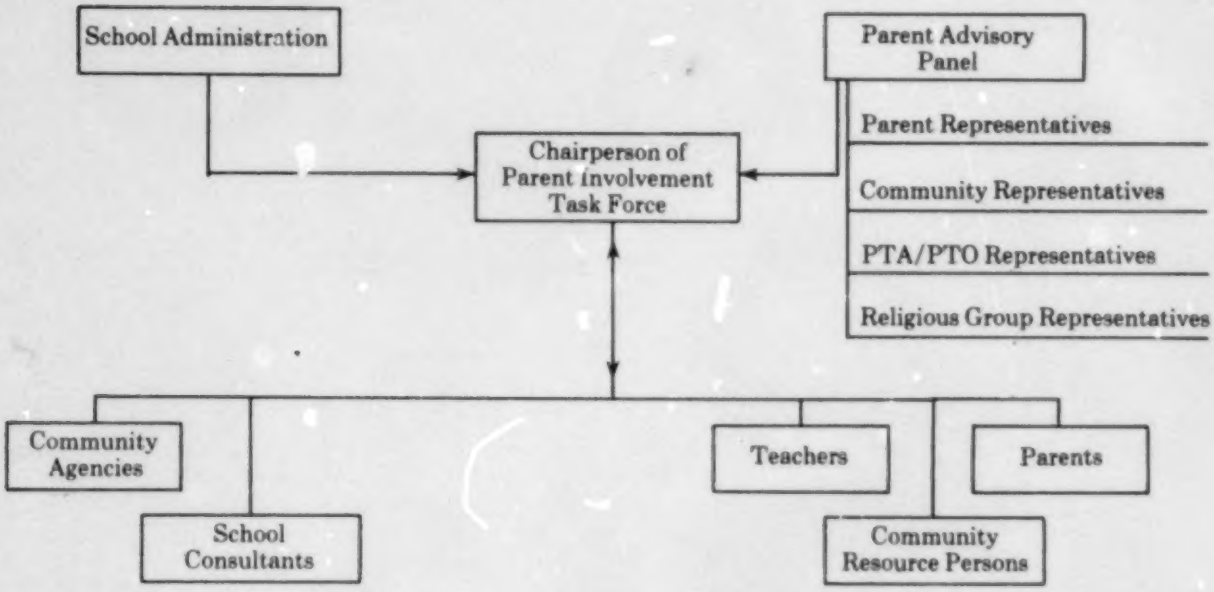


Few communication patterns will appear as simple as those shown here. This is especially so during discussions about the kinds of communication that could be expected to emanate from functioning parent involvement programs. The need during planning is not to determine or to illustrate all expected interactions, but rather to identify those interactions crucial to success in meeting the high priority purposes of the program.

Step 5: Developing an Organizational Structure

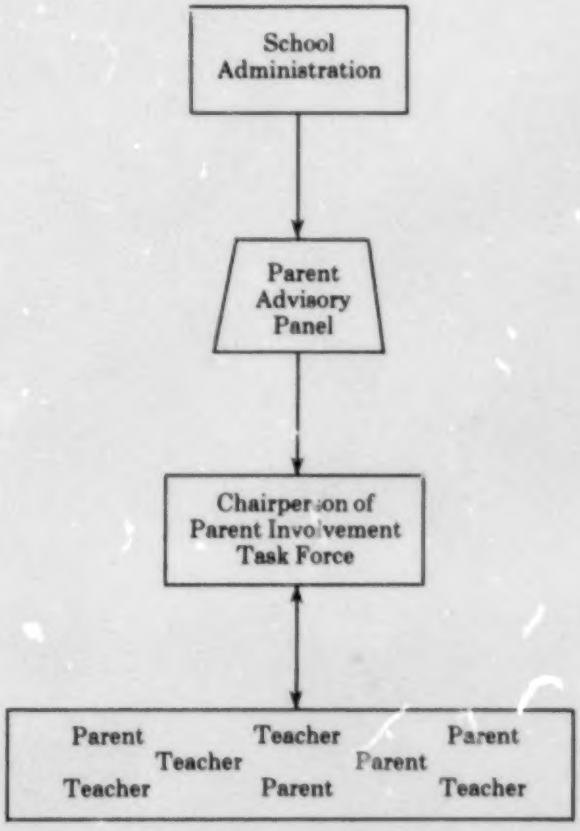
The organizational structure of the parent involvement model at any given school should reflect the purpose of that model, including the interactions that are perceived as important elements of the program. There seems to be general agreement that such a structure includes three major parts: participants, an advisory panel, and administration. Having explored the interaction patterns, the participants have been clearly identified and the advisory panel should include representatives from each of the participant groups. An administrative structure should clearly indicate the person in charge or responsible for daily functioning of the program. Likewise, if parents are to bring about change as a result of their efforts, they must understand their roles within the organizational structure and policy of the school system.

Organizational Structure A



Two organizational structures (A and B) are presented to help you think about the type of organizational structure best for your school. Each shows the chairperson allied with both administration and participants. In Structure A the administration is sharing responsibility more than in Structure B—or at least this is the intent of the diagram. How this works in practice may—probably will—vary considerably from intent. The advisory panel in A, it should be noted, reports directly to the chairperson, but is not in direct line from administration as in B. This difference probably results in less influence for both the chairperson and the advisory panel in B than in A. Drawing such a diagram during the planning phase of parent involvement makes the issue of influence clearly a topic for debate and consideration. At this time, too, the role of the parent advisory panel needs to be carefully examined. Is this role to be an active, frequently meeting, alternative generating, ideas form? Or is it to be a hearing forum for ideas brought for approval by the chairperson and/or administration? What is the balance between relinquishing responsibility to the panel, on the one hand, and the panel members serving as figure heads, on the other?

Organizational Structure B



Step 6: Identifying Parent Involvement Outcomes

Outcomes must be linked directly to purposes. Purposes should be stated in specific terms that provide some indication as to what kinds of activities are to be encouraged.

To increase the child's opportunities to handle books, to "read" picture books, and to hear stories read by one or preferably both parents.

It follows directly from this statement that three kinds of activities are to be encouraged and each is clearly enough identified as to make it possible to determine whether or not the child is experiencing these opportunities for reading readiness.

Objectives need not necessarily be directed to the child. Considering the findings of the needs assessment and the stated purposes of the parent involvement program, objectives may be directed to either parent or teacher.

To increase parent involvement in decision making in the school through membership on various committees, task forces and parent groups, and through more involvement with discussions at the School Board level.

To increase parent participation in classrooms as aides and tutors.

To increase informal teacher/parent communication through notes and telephone calls.

To increase the number of home visits made by the faculty.

In each instance these objectives provide suggestions for both activities that need to be encouraged and measurable outcomes that can be used in evaluation.

At another level, outcomes could become specific in the sense that they were directed to needs identified in the needs assessment. For instance, if the need is to help teachers understand children whose ethnic background differs from their own, the outcome could be identified in part as increased knowledge about this different culture growing out of discussions with parents. At still another level, this same goal could be associated with an outcome that implies a greater number of contacts in the classroom with these children and, in or out of the classroom, with their parents.

Step 7: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Parent Involvement

Evaluation is made easy or difficult in terms of how carefully things have been set in the six steps that precede evaluation and how realistic we are in our expectations for parent involvement. If outcomes have been clearly specified and if they are stated in ways that imply the kinds of information that will serve as evaluation data, the task is considerably simplified though never simple.

Evaluation activities are designed to determine whether goals have been achieved and what extra accomplishments have come about in association with the program.

Evaluation serves two main purposes. The first is to determine what has been accomplished and the second is to provide information that can be used to improve the nature and quality of the continuing Parent Involvement Program. In one sense, the first purpose of evaluation can be achieved through rather simple traditional modes of data collection and analysis. This means that we know before the program starts that the objective is: "To increase the number of parent visits to classrooms." For purposes of evaluation, then, we need to know how many visits were made in the past, a system of keeping track of the visits this year, and finally, a tabulation of the results at the end of the year. A comparison between the number of visits last year and the number this year tells you whether there has or has not been an increase. But this may be a simple answer to a question that could reveal some richness in those visits one would like to know about. To understand that richness, one must know what has gone on in planning for those visits, during the visits, and teacher and parent reactions to the visits. Increasingly, educational research is borrowing from other disciplines to include a careful look at the processes as they unfold. Studying the processes underway with a Parent Involvement Program requires frequent recording of what happened during those visits, what children's reactions were, how teachers believed they served for the good of children, and how parents felt about themselves, their children, and their teachers and school. Extending evaluation to include these kinds of subjective information provides much that is helpful in further refinement of the Parent Involvement Program.

Profiles of Parent Involvement Programs

Several profiles of Parent Involvement Programs follow. These descriptions are the products of a process in many ways similar to that previously discussed in this report. Hence, we see that the process model we have discussed results in a product, or a model appropriate to the needs of a given school. The models presented here are included to provide specific examples of the kinds of functioning programs that are currently underway in Wisconsin schools. The descriptions, though brief, provide some indication of the steps that might have been used in the process of bringing parents, teachers and administrators together in the creation of means to involve parents for the better education of their children.

Profile #1

PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Purpose:

To offer various opportunities and experiences which would build more positive and effective home-school communication.

Philosophy:

In most cases, parents provide a continuous and important influence on their children's achievement. Therefore, parent involvement is essential to maximize a child's education. This philosophy is based upon the following assumptions:

1. A child's environment, his experiences in it, and his reactions to those experiences, are determinant in academic achievement;

2. Parents teach their children since birth, mostly via the trial and error method;

3. Parents can learn various techniques from a teacher, thus enabling them to feel less stress in their parenting role;

4. Teachers can learn background information regarding children that parents can supply;

5. When home and school understand and accept each other, a child's learning will be facilitated and maximized.

Objectives:

1. Through an instructional program designed to emphasize basic principles in child, parent, and teacher growth, development and behavior, the participating parents will demonstrate significant gains as measured by pre/post test data of the Parent Education Constant Alternative Rating Scale.

2. Through the planning and implementation of appropriate activities and experiences, the participants will demonstrate a significant positive change in attitude toward school and education as measured by the Parent Attitude Scale.

3. The participants will demonstrate a significant change in behavior toward their children as measured by the Parent Behavior Graphic Scale.

4. The participants will demonstrate a change in behavior toward school participation as measured by the Parent Behavior Contact Scale.

Program Activities:

1. Home visits
2. Phone calls
3. Flyers and newsletters
4. Conferences
5. Group classes
6. Resource center
7. Films, filmstrips, tapes and handouts
8. Field trips
9. Speakers and resource consultants
10. Socials
11. Take-home workshops
12. Family nights
13. Recreation periods
14. Handicrafts
15. Demonstrations
16. Tour schools and agencies
17. Suggestion box, peoples' forum
18. Classroom observations
19. Small group sessions in the homes
20. Saturday and evening sessions
21. Tutoring
22. Mini-teaching
23. Chaperones
24. Operation outreach
25. Convention and seminar attendance
26. "Jam sessions"
27. A demonstration Center - How to Discipline ... How to Teach Language . . . How to Make Homemade Learning Games, etc.
28. A "How to Parent" newspaper
29. One-minute parenting tapes available for checkout use or telephone use
30. Classes in high schools on parenting
31. Classes at local hospitals during the new mother's stay
32. Classes at local clinics and libraries
33. Parenting bibliography lists made available for parents in a school
34. Handouts on file at schools on all aspects of parenting
35. Inservice sessions for teachers and administrators on how to work with parents

Profile #2

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Purpose:

To provide for parents the means through which they may become meaningfully involved in the educational process of their children.

Philosophy:

It is the belief of staff and the District Advisory Committee that through a parent involvement program, a working partnership can be created between home and school and that this functioning partnership is one key to social and academic success for children.

This philosophy is based upon the following assumptions:

1. That parents and school personnel are willing to

make a commitment to building a functioning partnership in the educational process.

2. That parents are a primary provider of educational experiences for children.

3. That parents and staff can learn from each other.

4. That parenting styles vary and that they can be viewed with acceptance by staff without value judgement

5. That parents, like children and teachers, have individual needs, preferences and strengths, and that provided with diversified opportunities for meaningful involvement, parents will choose to become involved in programs which are appropriate to their own needs, preferences and strengths as they relate to their children's needs.

Process Objectives:

1. A Parent Advisory Council, made up of a majority of parents, will be organized in each Title I building and will have training workshops planned to reflect council needs relative to taking an active role in the planning for parent involvement activities.

Evaluation Evidence:

Minutes and summaries of PAC meetings and training workshops will indicate the amount and type of council involvement.

2. Parent involvement activities will facilitate a diversity of parent needs and interests and will have primary emphasis on the parent-school partnership in helping children.

Evaluation Evidence:

Rosters, summaries and parent evaluations of activities will indicate ongoing involvement of parents in a variety of activity types.

3. Title I parent involvement activitites will serve as a catalyst for district activities.

Evaluation Evidence:

A log of dissemination and spin-off activities will be maintained.

Program Activities:

1. *PAC Training Workshops*—Training workshops are set up for the school councils. The purpose is to give building councils specific ideas for parent activities, of school and community resources and of their responsibilities in helping keep parent activities going in each building.

2. *Parent Workshops*—Parent workshops are set up to help parents learn more about the academic programs and ways they can help their children. At the workshops parents get involved with each other and "try out" activities. They become involved in communication games and buzz sessions and take home ideas of specific activities to explore with their children. They explore techniques for helping children select books and ways to keep children interested in reading. They discuss their relationship with their child and ways to improve it. They even write stories to get a feeling for the writing and editing that children do in school.

3. *Reading Parties*—Title I reading parties are held in individual buildings. The parents come in to share their children's reading activities by watching skits, plays and listening to original stories.

4. *Parents as Teaching Partners Meetings*—"Parents as Teaching Partners" meetings are organized in the buildings. The series of five sessions extends over a ten-week period. Parents explore reading and math and ways to work with their children. The parents, themselves, pre and post test their children on a selected instrument. After discussions, at each meeting, the children join the parents and work together on activities.

5. *Partners Writing Sessions*—After explanation of how writing helps children with reading, etc., each parent works with his own child on a creative writing activity. He assists by writing words the child needs and has on hand a list of questions to encourage "thinking" if his child gets stuck. When finished, each child reads his story to another child and parent. The stories are then turned into books.

6. *Back-to-School Days*—Parents are invited to come in to participate with their children in their Title I and regular classroom activities.

7. *Parent Classes*—PACs in some buildings arrange for a series of classes for parents with an instructor from the vocational school. Topics relate to "Helping My Child Learn."

8. *Home Reading Goals*—Parents may, after being involved in a group interaction process, set reading goals for themselves with their children at home.

9. *Building Boxes*—These colorfully decorated boxes made by parents serve as resource centers for books, articles and activities helpful to parents in working with their children.

10. *Home-School Communicators*—Great efforts are made to keep positive on-going communications with parents. Parent bulletins, glad-o-grams, etc., are used with emphasis on parent follow-up or school follow-up if initiated by the parents. These two-way communicators are a way of working with "working" and otherwise "busy" parents. Reading clubs which encourage home reading and the return of an accomplishment form to school are also formed.

Profile #3

PARENT INVOLVEMENT THROUGH VOLUNTEER PARENT GROUPS - PTA

A Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) is a local self-governing unit that plans its programs and activities to meet the needs of children and youth in the community.

Volunteer parents from all walks of life, parents of all students, parents who come forward because they are interested in the education and welfare of all children, can be invaluable to the school. Because parents initiate the involvement, there might be a tendency on the part of the administration or staff to draw back. However, volunteer groups are not special interest groups but are flexible and willing to explore and help to resolve problems that might or might not directly affect their own children, but do directly affect the school as a whole.

Through regularly scheduled or informal meetings, the parents and teachers in attendance learn from each other what is and what should be in their school, community or in their own homes. Individual interests and talents can be utilized and in many cases developed for the betterment of life for the child, the home, school and community. In this involvement, parents become more aware of their own importance in the education of the child.

The PTAs (volunteer parent groups) at all levels of education—preschool, elementary, junior high and senior high—may hold a series of meetings designed to help parents and community learn about school programs and services, school needs, community support and financing, teacher morale, parent morale, or volunteer services. Other possible activities of specific groups might be as follows:

Preschool and Elementary School Parent Groups

- Can provide (recruit) and help to train volunteers the school can use.
- Work together to provide teaching aids (audio-visual, etc.) the school system cannot afford, or to demonstrate to the school board the need for same.
- Sponsor and recruit volunteers for youth groups, Camp Fire Girls, Boy Scouts, etc.
- Provide parent volunteers to help plan and implement field trips, social events (picnics, holiday parties, etc.).
- Provide volunteers for health screening.
- Sponsor money raising events to defray costs of extra-curricular events.
- Sponsor delegates to seminars, conventions, etc., concerned with education and youth. These people in turn help to inform other parents.
- Provide a relaxed social atmosphere where parents and teachers can learn to understand one another as people.

High School Parent Groups

- Organize and sponsor a newsletter to go to all parents, giving information about current events in school, community, and how and why their interest is vital (Include special events, Career Days, athletic meets, dances, report card dates, etc.).
- Sponsor forums about current concerns.
- Recruit volunteers to help with social events, field trips, etc.
- Sponsor group informational meetings with counselors.
- Work together to raise funds for activities.
- Organize informal discussion groups, including parents, teachers, and students, where all can understand how current concerns such as drugs, academic pressure, human relations, rights and responsibilities affect each segment.
- Plan and provide volunteers for an all-night graduation party, all senior class parents, to chaperone, serve food, run games.
- Appoint a "parents grievance committee" through which parents' complaints and questions can be channeled (anonymously) to the principal and staff, so that efforts can be made to work out satisfactory solutions. At least one meeting a year would be devoted to the principal and staff members who will report on the action taken, or why no action is possible.
- Provide resource persons from among parents who can provide various vocational information to students.
- Sponsor an "Art Festival" with students, parents and teachers participating.
- Sponsor a social event, a dance, for teachers and parents (or a dinner).
- Provide delegates who will attend school board meetings and report to the membership, or represent the parents' view to the board.
- Parent groups can be informed about school needs and mobilize community support.
- Provide an informational guide to parents seeking help with specific problems (where to get help, agencies, individuals, telephone, address, etc.)
- Provide funds for Badger Boys and Girls, exchange students' prom expenses, special or individual student needs.
- Provide volunteers as tutors, library aides, teacher aides for non-teaching chores.
- Act as a sounding board for new ideas, proposed curriculum changes, questions of discipline, etc.

Profile #4

A MENU OF IDEAS

Once a community has gone through the process model and determined its needs and purposes, the creativity inherent in any group will provide the means and vehicles through which implementation can take place. To spark that creativity, here are a few ideas.

Playground Development

The most intense feelings of involvement, of a sense of community and of pride can be centered around development of a playground at a school through the joint staff-parent committee process. Planning takes nearly a year of meetings, listening to experts, scale models and a search for materials, most of which are donated by local merchants. The real excitement starts in the summer when parents and teachers gather every Saturday to build the tire trees, the wooden platforms, the rope slings. The reward comes in the fall when parents and staff together can watch the children at recess and lunch time enjoying a well-planned playground that belongs to them.

Happy Grams

So often parents only hear from the school when their children are having problems. To counter this, many schools have developed small, attractively printed "Happy Grams" which teachers use for brief notes praising something a child has done. Though children are noted for not taking printed matter home to parents—seldom does a "Happy Gram" get lost on the way.

Awards Night

Many schools have "Awards Night" at which children are given certificates for special accomplishments or services. Some schools have added beautifully printed certificates which are presented to parents the same night for all sorts of activities. Some have served as volunteers, some have been class parents, some have only read to their children at home, but all appreciate the recognition and their children are proud.

Read-Ins

One of the problems with learning to read these days is that reading doesn't seem important to children as it used to before the days of television. A "Read-In" at an elementary school is planned to let children see that adults enjoy and value reading. Children write letters of invitation to dozens of people and many accept the opportunity to read a favorite book to a group of children. What a thrill it is for children to hear stories from their parents, the mayor, the superintendent of schools and many others.

The Role of Libraries and IMCs

Schools can invite preschool children and their parents in for storyhours. This is a way for the children to become acquainted with the school they will be attending and for parents to feel welcome. It makes good sense educationally to use these occasions to open up the libraries and IMCs so that preschool parents can take advantage of these nearby resources for their children. Even better is when a librarian sets up a parent section of helpful books for all the parents in the school.

Instructional Home Packets for Parents

Most parents would work more with their children at home if they knew just what to do. Title I teachers have found it especially valuable for preschool and kindergarten to send monthly packets home with the children filled with activities the children can do, suggestions on parenting, and printed materials for children to work on. Other Title I programs have developed summer packets for all grades so that parents have some direction for helping their children during the summer.

Mini-Courses

A number of high schools have used the two or three days between semesters to involve the community, teachers, and students in planning a midwinter change of pace. Students plan a large schedule of mini-courses which match their interests and then find instructors from among themselves, the community and the teachers. Mini-courses range from karate to ballroom dancing, from psychology to macramé, and make use of the many talents available in any community.

Junior highs and elementary schools sometimes use two to six Friday afternoons in a row to provide the same kind of interest-centered mini-classes for students, using the talents of parents and teachers as instructors.

Career Education

Classroom teachers can design an excellent career education curriculum around the jobs held by parents of class members, or their special skills and hobbies. Parents are delighted to talk to their own children's classmates about themselves and to show some of their products or tools. "Artists" in the classroom or the showing of hobbies expand the children's world. Both the children and their parents can feel a very personal kind of involvement in this activity.

Indoor Playground

In urban areas young parents of preschoolers are often isolated in their homes or apartments in the winter.

Think of the possibilities for future involvement and positive feelings about schools if an indoor playground could be provided. A green carpeted floor, swings, a slide, a sandbox, and a pot of coffee kept hot and available for a dime a cup would return a great deal for the cost of original equipment and janitor service. It could be the beginning of a real sense of community so often missing in urban America.

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